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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001544

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA, NEA/ARP, DS FOR TAYLOR, S/CT FOR BLACK,  
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CJTF HOA, NSC FOR TOWNSEND AND MCCRAVEN

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: ROYG OPERATION AGAINST TERRORISTS IN ABYAN

REF: SANAA 1440

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull for Reasons 1.5 (b,d)

11. (S/NF) Summary and Comment: On June 25, ROYG launched an offensive against terrorists suspected in the June 21 attack on a ROYG military medical convoy in Abyan (ref). The successful operation resulted in approximately 30 combatants killed or captured. Initial reports indicate a link between these terrorists and al-Qaeda, and the strong ROYG response appears to have dealt an important and successful blow against attempts to re-establish a strong al-Qaeda presence in Yemen. The contribution of U.S.-trained Central Security Forces (CSF), the open lines of communication between ROYG and the Embassy during this operation and strong counterterrorism cooperation between Yemen and the U.S. generally emphasize the importance of continuing robust CT training assistance. End Summary and Comment.

12. (S/NF) Additional information on both attacks has been reported via ORCA and other channels.

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ROYG Operation Against Possible AAIA Remnants in Abyan  
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13. (S/NF) The attack on a ROYG military medical convoy by terrorists, believed to be comprised of remnants of the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA) and other extremists, in Abyan on June 21 left seven injured (ref). In response, approximately 700 ROYG military and security forces gathered in the region of the Hatat mountains in Abyan governorate on June 24. Five terrorists surrendered overnight on June 24 according to DMI sources. After negotiations for surrender failed and the 1000 June 25 deadline passed without result, the ROYG forces began their assault on the remaining terrorists (estimated at 80-100 persons). The combined ROYG forces included the Army and U.S.-trained Central Security Forces (CSF). Involvement of possible Political Security Organization (PSO) forces could not be confirmed. The attack began with an artillery barrage, followed by helicopter attacks and a frontal assault by ground forces.

14. (C) Consistent but unconfirmed reports from press reports and other sources put the number of extremists killed or captured at between 20 and 30. Those captured were being interrogated. Press reports confirmed by CSF also indicate that a large amount of explosives and weapons were also seized on June 25.

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PSO Chief Gamish -- Terrorist Leader Linked to al-Qaeda?  
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15. (S/NF) At the request of President Saleh via a phone call to the Ambassador, the Ambassador and ORCA Chief met with Political Security Organization (PSO) Chief Gamish on 6/26. Gamish said the reputed leader of the insurgents, Abu Bashir Abdul Nabi, was recently in Saudi Arabia and came to Yemen in the last three months. A mujahed who fought in Afghanistan, his mission in Abyan was allegedly to re-organize Yemeni al-Qaeda, which has been degraded in the last year. Press reports stated that Abdul Nabi was killed in action, and Col. Yahya Saleh of the CSF confirmed that he was killed. Gamish reported that two ROYG forces were killed in action and that several captured extremists were being interrogated. DMI told the DATT that two ROYG forces were killed and three wounded.

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ROYG Op Successful -- U.S.-trained Forces Key  
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16. (S/NF) The Central Security Forces (CSF) Counterterrorism Unit is a newly formed entity within the Central Security Organization (CSO). The unit currently consists of approximately 150 officers and enlisted. All members of the unit received basic training in rural and urban CT tactics. The training has been and continues to be provided by U.S. and U.K. military trainers. Both groups of trainers assess the unit members as being highly motivated. The Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG) touts this unit as the National CT unit of Yemen.

17. (S/NF) The CSF CT Unit deployed to the Abyan area in response to the 6/21 attack on the ROYG military medical team. This unit was the only ground element that was deployed from the North of Yemen. They were heavily involved in the fighting, engaging the enemy at ranges as close as 15 meters. They were also tasked to clear and search in excess of 20 caves. The unit returned to Sana'a after the hostilities on June 27 only to be redeployed on the morning of June 28. The ongoing effort is aimed at further exploiting the caves for intelligence and looking for remnants of the terrorist group.

18. (S/NF) On the evening of June 28, CSF officials invited U.S. military trainers to view film footage of combat operations conducted by the CSF during the Abyan operation. The film confirmed the capture of a large quantity of explosives and at least six dead terrorists. The dead terrorists did not appear to be native Yemenis but foreign fighters with long beards and military-style ammo vests. CSF indicated that a reduced-length copy of the film will be released to the Embassy in the near future.

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Comment and Recommendation  
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19. (C) President Saleh and others have requested continued U.S. support for counterterrorism training and the Embassy is studying requests for an expansion of economic assistance to the Abyan governorate as an area targeted by extremists as an operations area. Somewhat unusually, the ROYG kept the Embassy continually informed on developments and invited the media to cover the operation. Additionally, the effective performance of the U.S.-trained CSF adds a strong argument for sorely-needed further funding to continue and expand CT training.

HULL